

Joining Forces Toolkit For Faith Communities

Background/

The White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (WHOFBNP) coordinates 13 federal agency Centers of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships charged with forming and supporting partnerships between the government and secular and faith-based nonprofit organizations to serve those in need. An important emphasis of this work is to address the needs of veterans and military families. *Joining Forces*, housed within the First Lady's Office is a comprehensive national initiative to mobilize all sectors of society to address the specific issues faced by veterans and military families.

Launched by First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, *Joining Forces*:

- Brings attention to the unique needs and strengths of America's military families.
- Inspires, educates, and sparks action from all sectors of society – citizens, communities, businesses, non-profits, faith based institutions, philanthropic organizations, and government - to ensure veterans and military families have the opportunities, resources, and support they have earned.
- Showcases the skills, experience, and dedication of America's veterans and military spouses to strengthen our nation's communities.
- Creates greater connections between the American public and the military.

The effort highlights issues of special relevance to service members and their families in the areas of **employment**, **education**, and **wellness**.

Introduction/Getting Started

Faith and community-based organizations have long been at the forefront of supporting service members, veterans and military families. Just like military families and veterans, faith-based institutions are present in every community. Congregations help military families with everything from providing childcare, yard work, and transportation for doctors appointments, to emergency financial support. During deployments, separations, and transitions between assignments, many congregations also provide counseling services. They can also offer meaningful service opportunities for veterans who want to continue serving even after they turn in their uniforms and transition into civilian life. Faith leaders play an important role in informing their communities about families that could use a little extra support, which provides them an opportunity to raise awareness in their congregations about the deployments and transitions happening in their neighborhoods. In short, faith leaders play a critical role as resources and connectors for their communities. This toolkit is designed to help faith leaders learn about ways to support our military families and veterans. It includes best practices and real-life examples of these efforts. The second section lists a host of resources that can be leveraged to support your congregants and communities.

As a faith leader in your community, what can you do to support veterans and military families? Here are a few suggestions to help you get started:

1. Make a special effort to ensure that your existing ministries and services integrate and are accessible to military families and veterans
2. Expand a military families' ministry or program that you have already launched
3. Reach out to the National Guard in your state to learn about who in your surrounding communities is a military family, and what those families are facing. Connect with the Chaplain, and offer to extend your support services to military families and units in your area.
4. Invite your state's National Guard chaplain to your next community gathering. Establish a relationship with the chaplain and offer to be a community resource for Guard families.
5. Consider starting a new ministry or service for military families or veterans, or partner with an existing program in your community

6. Coordinate a monthly, quarterly or annual fair, event or service focused on serving the needs of veterans and military families
7. Help raise awareness about the issues and challenges that military families and veterans face
8. Dedicate one weekly service a month to introducing a veteran or service member and highlighting his or her contributions
9. Consider veterans when looking to fill leadership positions in your service outreach
10. Connect veterans and military families with needed resources to address their concerns and issues (see attached list of resources)
11. Partner with your local VA Hospital, military installation, National Guard Armory, and/or military serving organization to support a need of theirs
12. Participate in Partners In Care (additional information is listed in this guide)

Examples and Best Practices

Several faith communities and congregations have shared examples of the ways they are supporting military families and veterans. Some of these examples are listed below. You can serve military families and veterans in whatever ways work best for you and your congregants.

Adopt a Unit. Reach out to your National Guard or area military base. Ask whether you can adopt a set of families to provide support and services during deployment. Find out what these families need, or just lighten their load by offering some help with day-to-day tasks, like grocery shopping, babysitting, transportation to medical appointments or job interviews, a hot meal, lawn care or yard work, or donate clothing for a special event.

Celebrate Military Traditions. Support the military-connected congregants in your house of worship by celebrating the Month of the Military Child, Veterans Day, Memorial Day, or even the birthday of one of the services. Showcase military families in your congregation, and find meaningful ways to support military families on those occasions.

Reach out to Deployed Troops. Send monthly care packages with supportive words, letters of encouragement, packaged foods and books to deployed personnel. Consider sending a “family” care package to that service member’s family back home. You might include materials for a “family night” – DVDS, microwave popcorn, board games, or children’s books. Drop a photo of the family care package into the deployed service member’s care package. Troops would almost always have their families recognized than themselves.

Host a Community Outreach Event. One church invited several community organizations and leaders to attend an event for the congregation’s veterans and military families. Invite your area Veterans Affairs department, veterans service organizations, and nonprofit organizations to set up booths providing information on the programs and services available to veterans, their families and survivors.

Host a Veterans Day Event. You might call the local department of Veterans Affairs to ask whether you can host a Stand Down event or invite a representative to educate veterans on benefits and services. Invite veterans service organizations and the general public to come and pay tribute to veterans.

Create a Volunteer Database to Support Military families. Maintain a database of volunteer's skills (basic home repairs from painting to fixing window screens to changing washers on a faucet) to match with need as they arise. Some may volunteer to drop off a home-cooked meal or buy a bag of groceries for a military family.

Participate in Partners in Care. Learn more about your state's National Guard Partners in Care program (see below for more information). Partners in Care is an initiative to coordinate support for National Guard members and families through partnerships with local faith communities. All faith communities are welcome to participate in Partners in Care. **Launch a Fatherhood Initiative.** Consider implementing a Fatherhood Initiative specifically for military fathers in your congregation. Help military fathers find ways to maintain strong relationships with their children, even when they are deployed or away for training. Visit fatherhood.gov to learn how to start a Fatherhood Initiative for military dads.

Partners in Care

“Partners In Care” is a State Program assigned to the Adjutant General by the Governor and administrated by the State Joint Force Headquarters’ Chaplain (JFHQ-CH). The purpose of this program is to coordinate support to citizen soldiers, veterans, and their families through partnerships with local faith communities.

All Faith Communities are welcome to participate as Partners In Care congregations. Each congregation formalizes this relationship by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU defines the purpose, scope, and nature of the partnership. Support is offered by the participating congregations to all referred citizen soldiers, veterans, and their families within the limits of the congregation’s resources and abilities, free of charge without regard to the recipients religious affiliation.

Referrals to congregations are made through the coordinated efforts of the JFHQ-CH Office and State Family Readiness Office. Referral to a Partners In Care congregation does not imply an endorsement of a particular religion and congregations are not allowed to use referrals as an opportunity to recruit or proselyte.

Each congregation agrees to provide a list of supportive services offered as well as a congregational Point of Contact for coordination, communication, referrals and support. The JFHQ-CH agrees to provide training for local clergy and volunteers to help them understand the special needs of citizen soldiers, veterans, and their families.

It is recognized that our citizen soldiers, veterans, and their families are an integral part of local communities across each State. These citizen soldiers, veterans, and their families have endured the stress incumbent upon those who sacrifice in service to the defense of liberty and the safety and security of both State and Nation. It is further recognized that within our communities are congregations uniquely equipped and able to provide faith-based support to citizen soldiers, veterans, and their families in times of crisis, stress and need. To that end Partners In Care exists.

If you would like more information about becoming a “Partners In Care” congregation please contact National Guard Bureau Joint Chaplain Office, Rev. Dr. Norman L. Williams (norman.l.williams.ctr@us.army.mil).

Employment

The Need

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for veterans who have recently left military service outpaces the adult unemployment rate in the U.S. by several percentage points. Additionally, the Department of Labor reports that 8.4 percent of military wives are seeking jobs and cannot find one, compared to 5.3 percent of women in civilian families.¹ Returning service members may face additional barriers to employment, such as the need for additional training, lack of transportation, physical impairments, and mental health issues.

Between relocations and the lack of reciprocity across states for licenses and certifications, finding and retaining employment can be difficult for spouses and family members as well. In fact, military families move on average every 2.9 years, making it hard to pursue a single career or accumulate the experience employers want.²

America's young people also face record unemployment. Like all youth, older children of service members and military families need meaningful summer employment. Youth need mentoring and guidance to identify summer job opportunities and internships, as well as guidance on how to leverage their skills as members of military households into strong resumes.

The Opportunity

Numerous resources exist to help connect veterans with training and employment. Explore the links below to learn about programs that leverage the workforce potential of veterans and military spouses, expand their career development opportunities, and help employers create military family-friendly workplaces. Help young people connect with mentors that can guide them toward meaningful internships and jobs. Find mentoring programs in your community through your state mentoring partnership or through MENTOR (www.mentoring.org). Returning service members and their spouses can also benefit from peer mentoring around job skills and entrepreneurship through programs at the SBA (www.sba.org).

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Business Advisors (www.sba.gov/training)
— Works with a variety of local partners to provide entrepreneurship support. These

¹ Wood, D. (2011). Military Spouses Face Difficulties Finding Employment.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/04/12/military-families-spouses-unemployment_n_846825.html.

² Wood, D. (2011). Military Spouses Face Difficulties Finding Employment.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/04/12/military-families-spouses-unemployment_n_846825.html.

professionals can help with writing a formal business plan, locating sources of financial assistance, managing and expanding your business, finding opportunities to sell goods or services to the government, and recovering from disaster. These business advisors include SCORE counselors - www.score.org; Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) - www.sba.gov/sbdc; and Women's Business Centers (WBCs) - www.sba.gov/women; and Veterans Business Outreach Centers (<http://www.sba.gov/content/veterans-business-outreach-centers>). To find your local district office or SBA business advisor quickly, visit www.sba.gov/sba-direct.

Operation Boots to Business: *from Service to Startup*

(<http://www.sba.gov/bootstobusiness>) — Launched by SBA, this Public-Private Partnership to Train Transitioning Service Members in Entrepreneurship seeks to help even more veterans and transitioning service members grow their businesses and create jobs. SBA has worked with its business advisor network (including Women's Business Centers (WBCs), SCORE chapters, Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), and Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs)), Syracuse University, the VA, and DOD to provide transitioning service members the knowledge, tools and resources they need to evaluate opportunities and become successful entrepreneurs. Through the Boots to Business initiative, service members will learn the nuts and bolts of how to start and grow a business.

United States Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Services

(DOLVETS) (www.dol.gov/vets/) — A pilot program in selected communities around the country, DOLVETS was initiated through the Department of Labor's (DOL) desire to conduct targeted outreach to unemployed and underemployed veterans. With a focus on employment opportunities, DOLVETS has evolved from its pilot into a one-stop training and employment resource. Check to see if services or employment listings exist for your area.

Veteran Gold Card (<http://www.dol.gov/vets/goldcard.html>) – Provides post-9/11 veterans with the Veteran Gold Card, which entitles them to enhanced services including six months of personalized case management, assessments and counseling, and jobs clubs at One-Stop Career Centers located across the country.

My Next Move for Veterans (<http://www.mynextmove.org/vets/>) - Allows veterans to enter their military occupation code and discover civilian occupations for which they are well qualified. This new website also includes information about salaries, apprenticeships, and more, all related to education and training programs.

Veterans Job Bank

(https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/home/veterans_job_bank) — Provides an easy to use tool to help veterans find job postings from companies looking to hire them, as well as a central source for employers looking to hire veterans. The site already searches over one million job postings and is growing.

VetCorps (<http://www.cadca.org/vetcorps>) — Recruits and places AmeriCorps and VISTA members, particularly veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserves, in one of CADCA's community coalitions located throughout the country to provide support to veterans and military families. Participants will gain valuable training, skills and expand their networks.

Veterans Fast Launch (http://www.score.org/Veterans_Fast_Launch) – Assists veterans and military families in starting new businesses and gaining the skills to successfully launch and maintain those businesses. The project offers veterans and their families a combined package of services, free business software, and scholarships to attend SCORE's Simple Steps for Starting Your Business workshops.

Hire A Vet (<http://www.hireveterans.com/>) – Provides an online job search tool specially designed for veterans that includes a searchable database of current job openings, the ability to submit a resume and apply for jobs, and other information on employment searches.

Military Spouse Job Search (<http://www.military.com/spouse/job-search>) – Helps military spouses find employment and educational support through a database of careers and education assistance programs.

Military Spouse Employment Partnership (<https://msejobs.militaryonesource.mil/>) – Partners Fortune 500 Plus companies with all Military Services and provides human resource (HR) managers with recruitment solutions specifically designed towards military spouses. Services offered prepare military spouses to become competitive, “job ready” applicants and connects them with employers seeking the essential 21st century workforce skills and attributes they possess.

Hiring Our Heroes: Chamber of Commerce Veteran and Military Spouse Hiring Events (<http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/events>) – Helps veterans start or grow a small business through getting proper certification, licensing, and specialized training for veterans and their spouses through events offered around the country. This project also works to increase the availability of mentors within the business community.

Military Spouse Business Alliance

(<http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/military-spouse-business-alliance-msba>)

– Supports military spouses in their employment efforts, including: (1) providing networking, mentoring, and training opportunities; (2) providing opportunities for entrepreneurial spouses to share best practices and pool resources for achieving a profitable business; and (3) easing challenges for professional military spouses by supporting efforts to reduce or eliminate licensing and credentialing barriers.

Employer Support of National Guard and Reserve Ombudsman Services (ESGR)

(<http://www.military.com/benefits/military-legal-matters/userra/employer-support-of-the-guard-and-reserve.html>) — The Ombudsman Services Program provides

information, informal mediation, and referral services to resolve employer conflicts.

ESGR volunteers and the Ombudsmen of the national staff are available to promptly respond to inquiries and conflicts presented by employees or employers. ESGR is not an enforcement agency and does not offer legal counsel or advice.

Transportation

The Need

Among veterans with spinal cord injuries, only 16 percent of those unable to drive are able to obtain permanent employment, compared with 58 percent of those who can drive themselves to work.³ Many veterans endure chronic medical conditions or face long recoveries that require specialized medical care. Longer travel times to health care locations have a negative impact on a veteran's access to care. This includes older veterans' outpatient care; outpatient and inpatient care for veterans with spinal cord injuries, outpatient care after myocardial infarction, aftercare for substance abuse treatment and mental health resources.⁴

The absence of other transportation options is also a factor in health categories such as routine immunizations and dental care. In a study analyzing why older veterans at risk for influenza did not comply with recommended vaccination protocols, 13 percent of respondents reported transportation difficulties as a major factor in their decision not to pursue immunization. With dental care, 55 percent of veterans who could drive independently or had access to public transit had visited the dentist within the last year, whereas 25 percent of homebound veterans had not been to the dentist in more than a year.

Military families also face challenges that are not disability and illness related. One challenge is getting kids to school and recreation opportunities in new locations. The average child in a military family moves and switches schools three times as often as a civilian child. Many military bases and installations are located in remote areas and surrounded by restricted land use zones, making it difficult for families living on base to connect to regional transportation networks.⁵

The Opportunity

In addition to the resources below, many national service programs are partnering with local veterans service organizations (VSOs) to provide much-needed transportation assistance to veterans and military families. See the Community Connectedness section for information on national service programs in your area.

³ Selbst, Liz. (2011). America's veterans need more and better transportation options. Transportation for America. <http://t4america.org/blog/2010/07/02/americas-veterans-need-more-and-better-transportation-options/>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Volunteer Transportation Networks

(<http://www.volunteer.va.gov/VolTransNetwork.asp>) — Links volunteer drivers with veterans seeking and/or receiving benefits from the VA or other authorized facilities. the Transportation Network is a program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Safe Routes to Schools (<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resourcecenter/quick-facts>) — Seeks to create safe, convenient and fun opportunities for children to bicycle and walk to and from schools. Safe Routes to School programs are built on collaborative partnerships among many stakeholders that include educators, parents, students, elected officials, engineers, city planners, business and community leaders, health officials, and bicycle and pedestrian advocates. The goal of Safe Routes to School is to get more children bicycling and walking to schools safely every day. This website can connect you with local Safe Routes to Schools programs and/or provide information to develop your own program.

Wellness

The Need

Both physical and mental health needs have changed for veterans. Since September 11, 2001, more than two million service members have deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan with unprecedented duration and frequency. These long deployments and intense combat conditions require optimal support for the emotional and mental health needs of our service members and their families. The need for mental health services will only increase in the coming years as the nation deals with the effects of more than a decade of conflict.

Military families are not immune to the stresses of deployment. There is a growing body of research on the impact of prolonged deployment and trauma-related stress on military families, particularly spouses and children.⁶ For example, the cumulative impact of multiple deployments is associated with more emotional difficulties among military children and more mental health diagnoses among spouses.

The Opportunity

The following websites and resources can help you identify a range of supports for veterans and military families struggling with both physical and mental health issues — as well as the impact of those struggles on spouses, children and other family members.

⁶ Military Teen. (2011) Military Children Face Greater Academic Challenges Due To Relocation and Emotional Stress. <http://www.militaryteenonline.com/profiles/blogs/military-children-face-greater>.

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (<http://www.cadca.org/>) – Trains local grassroots groups in becoming community anti-drug coalitions and implementing effective community problem-solving strategies. Other priorities include teaching communities how to assess their local substance abuse-related problems and develop a comprehensive plan to address those problems. Current prevention projects are identified below.

VetCorps (<http://www.cadca.org/vetcorps>) – Launches a partnership between the National Guard Bureau's Prevention, Treatment and Outreach (PTO) Program and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), to recruit and place AmeriCorps and VISTA members, particularly veterans and inactive National Guard and Reserve members, in local CADCA community coalitions to provide support to veterans and military families. While a value is placed on recruiting veterans as national service members, veterans and their families are also the intended recipients of this service.

Medicine Abuse Awareness

(http://www.cadca.org/about/programs_campaigns/medicine-abuse-awareness) – Provides information about the rise in youth medicine abuse, particularly over-the-counter cold and cough medicine abuse. A range of tips and tools are available for download and local use.

Tobacco Initiatives (<http://www.cadca.org/tobacco>) – Supports community-level efforts to reduce chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes to improve health, reduce health disparities, and control health care spending.

American Veterans with Brain Injuries (<http://www.avbi.org/>) – Offers support to the families of American service members and veterans who have suffered brain injuries. The website also includes web-based peer support networks for family members and caregivers as well as a “veterans only” network. Chat rooms and forums are interactive and designed to allow participants to ask questions, get information, and share personal experiences with others.

DoD/VA Suicide Outreach: Resources for Suicide Prevention

(<http://www.suicideoutreach.org/>) – Provides access to hotlines, treatment options, professional resources, forums and multiple media designed to link veterans and military families to resources for suicide prevention. Twenty-four hour chat connects users with a Health Resource Consultant at any time.

Defence Centers of Excellence (DCoE) Outreach Center

(<http://www.dcoe.health.mil/24-7help.aspx>) — The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury provides a resource center with information about psychological health, post-traumatic stress disorder, and traumatic brain injury. The center can be contacted 24/7 by phone at 866-966-1020.

Military OneSource

(<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/MOS/f?p=MOS:CONTENT:0::::SV,UT,LG,CID,TID,COHE:Army%2520Active,Member,EN,,,261882>) - Military OneSource offers three kinds of short-term, non-medical counseling options to active-duty military members and their families. These counseling services are designed to provide service help with short-term issues such as adjustment to situational stressors, stress management, decision making, communication, grief, blended-family issues, and parenting-skills issues.

National Resource Directory (NRD) (<https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>): — This partnership between the Department of Defense, Department of Labor and Veteran's Affairs connects veterans and military families to services and resources at the national, state and local levels. Available resources include those that support recovery, rehabilitation and community reintegration.

Affordable Care Act (www.HealthCare.gov) — Answers questions about the Affordable Care Act including information on federal and state funded insurance for those with pre-existing conditions. Insurance options and applications for coverage are included.

Family Wellness

The Need

Fifty five percent of the military force is married, resulting in approximately 700,000 military spouses and an additional 400,000 spouses of Reserve members.⁷ In addition, more than 150,000 single parents currently serve in the military. There are 1.9 million children with a parent serving in the military including 220,000 with a parent currently

⁷The White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. (2011). Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting Our Commitment. Office of the President: Washington, D.C. (p. 1)

deployed.⁸ One in five service members have filed for divorce since 2001 with a 44 percent increase between 2001 and 2004.⁹

The Opportunity

Faith and spiritual leaders regularly provide counsel and support to families in times of struggle, transition, or loss. Being proactive is important, but when you see the warning signs that a family needs assistance, the following resources can point you toward helpful strategies and tools.

Quality of Life Foundation (<http://www.qolfoundation.org/>) — Supports families who provide a substantial amount of care giving to a wounded, injured or ill veteran. Client families include veterans with combat and non-combat-related traumatic brain injuries; PTSD, stroke; spinal cord injuries; multiple amputations, and other poly-trauma injuries. The Quality of Life Foundation focuses on the whole family because often times, care giving responsibilities, coupled with financial strain, result in family members forgoing their own quality of life needs. Things like recreation, respite, home modifications, house and lawn care, and personal care (haircuts, medical and dental appointments, etc) take a low priority due to income and time constraints. The Foundation addresses quality of life needs through local and national resources, or through the outright purchase of goods/services.

Wounded Warrior Project (<http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/>) — Takes a holistic approach when serving warriors and their families to nurture the mind and body and encourage economic empowerment and engagement. Through a high-touch and interactive approach, WWP hopes to foster the most successful, well-adjusted generation of wounded service members in our nation's history.

Fatherhood (www.fatherhood.gov/initiative) – Supports responsible fatherhood and reengaging absentee fathers in the lives of their children. This national initiative includes a searchable database with programs and information to help fathers connect with their children through federally funded and organized programs.

Military Spouse.Com (<http://www.military.com/spouse>) — Focuses on issues and situations faced by military families with a special emphasis on the needs of the spouse. Resources and information include those focused on military life, deployment, relocation, and social support.

⁸ The White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. (2011). Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting Our Commitment. Office of the President: Washington, D.C. (p. 13).

⁹ LaPlante, M. (2008). Military Divorce Rates Rising. Reporter News.
<http://www.reporternews.com/news/2008/jan/13/military-divorce-rates-rising/>.

Military OneSource

(<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/MOS/f?p=MOS:CONTENT:0::::SV,UT,LG,CID,TID,COHE:Army%2520Active,Member,EN,,,261882>) — Offers three kinds of short-term, non-medical counseling options to active-duty military members and their families. These counseling services are designed to address short-term issues like blended-family issues, and parenting-skills issues.

Operation Purple (<http://www.militaryfamily.org/our-programs/operation-purple/>) — Empowers military children and their families through a camp for children of active duty military with opportunities for play, fun, and learning about the environment with other children facing the similar issues. Operation Purple aims to help military children and their families develop and maintain healthy and connected relationships, in spite of their current situations.

Coaching Into Care (<http://www.mirecc.va.gov/coaching/>) — Provides a free and confidential coaching service for family and friends of veterans who see that their veteran needs help. Coaching involves helping the family member and/or friend figure out how to help find appropriate services in their community and motivate their veteran. This free service is provided by licensed clinical social workers and psychologists.

Military Youth on the Move

(<http://apps.mhf.dod.mil/pls/psgprod/f?p=MYOM:HOME2:0>) — Targets children with a parent(s) in the military, and includes separate sections for elementary school students, middle school students, and high school students providing advice, safety information and healthy eating information, as well as resources for help with their parent's deployment, divorce, bullying, or just needing someone to talk to.

Let's Move Faith and Communities Toolkit

(http://www.hhs.gov/partnerships/resources/Pubs/lets_move_toolkit.pdf) — Provides information on addressing the challenges of childhood obesity and efforts to help communities create healthy, physically active and nutritionally sound communities, neighborhoods and families.

MENTOR/The National Mentoring Partnership (www.mentoring.org) — Connects young people with mentoring opportunities in communities across the nation. Links to state mentoring partnerships can also help you identify local programs, both for youth who need a mentor and for members of your community who would like to volunteer.

Housing

The Need

On a single night in January 2011, 67,495 homeless veterans spent the night on the streets of America. An estimated 144,842 veterans spent at least one night in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program in one recent year. Many other veterans are considered at risk of homelessness because of poverty, lack of support from family and friends, substance use or mental health issues, and precarious living conditions.

The Opportunity

Whether you are seeking assistance for homeless veterans and their families in your community or working with families who seek to buy, build equity in, and remain in their own homes, the following programs and websites can connect you with the resources to do so. The VA has also unveiled a five-year plan to end homelessness among veterans. Many of the resources associated with this initiative are listed here, but contact VSOs in your community to learn more about related local efforts.

Stand-Down Against Homelessness (www.va.gov/Homeless) – Convenes Stand Downs, which are typically one- to three-day events providing services to homeless veterans such as food, shelter, clothing, health screenings, Veterans Administration and Social Security benefits counseling, and referrals to a variety of other necessary services, such as housing, employment and substance abuse treatment. Stand Downs are collaborative events, coordinated among local VAs, other government agencies, and community agencies who serve the homeless.

Department of Treasury Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP)

(www.makingyourhomeaffordable.gov) — Connects military homeowners to opportunities for mortgage assistance. HAMP offers mortgage assistance to individuals who are displaced due to an out-of-area job transfer, intend to return to the home at some point in the future and do not own any other single-family real estate.

HUD VET (<http://www.hudhre.info/VeteransAssistance/>) — Provides veterans and military families with information ranging from homeownership to homelessness. This website lists all HUD homeless veteran programs and initiatives, as well as resources, publications, and relevant links to other service agencies and organizations. In addition, the website provides local contact information for each of the programs.

HUD Supportive Housing

(http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/vash) – A joint initiative of HUD and the VA, provides supportive housing resources to veterans experiencing homelessness. Through this program HUD provides housing choice vouchers and the VA contributes case management and outreach.

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (<http://www1.va.gov/homeless/>) — Conducts individual needs assessment and information about available homeless programs and services directed towards veterans experiencing homelessness. After a brief needs assessment with a trained Veterans Affairs staff member, the caller will be connected with the Homeless Point of Contact at the nearest veterans facility. Family members and non-Veterans Administration service providers calling on behalf of the veteran will be provided with information as well.

Food Security

The Need

According to the Defense Commissary Agency, military members and their families redeemed food stamps last year at nearly twice the civilian rate. More than \$31 million worth of food stamps was used at commissaries nationwide in 2008 — an increase of more than 25 percent.¹⁰ Census data suggests that about 1.5 million households with a veteran were receiving Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.¹¹

The Opportunity

In addition to local food banks, national programs and resources can help veterans and military families access healthy food and meet their nutritional needs. The following website will help you learn and do more.

SNAP (http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant_recipients/apply.htm) — Provides assistance for purchasing food based on income level. SNAP is a federal program, but the link included connects you directly to your state's SNAP agency.

Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA)

(<https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/fssa/>) — Provides a supplemental allowance for food to military families. Families currently on SNAP who qualify for FSSA receive a monthly cash allowance equal to their food stamp amount. Those not on food stamps receive the

¹⁰ Yonkman, M.M. & Bridgeland, J.M. (2009). All Volunteer Force: From Military Service to Civilian Service. Civic Enterprises: Washington, D.C. (p. 9).

¹¹ McAuliff, M. (2012). Food Stamp Cuts Could Hit Military Members, Veterans. Huffington Post. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/06/18/food-stamp-cuts-military-bases-commissary_n_1607249.html

amount of money required to bring their income to 130 percent of the federal poverty line, not to exceed \$500. Qualification is based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's gross monthly income eligibility limits based on household size. However, unlike qualifying for food stamps, the FSSA includes housing allowances in the equation.

Operation Homefront (<http://www.operationhomefront.net/servicedetail.aspx?id=1026>) — Provides food assistance in the form of food boxes, gift certificates to grocery stores, or food vouchers to the commissary that last up to one week. Operation Homefront will also assist clients in identifying additional food resources.

Feeding America (<http://feedingamerica.org/need-help.aspx>) – Links to a network of 200 food banks across the country and organizations dedicated to fighting hunger distributing food to people in need, including veterans and military families. This searchable website can provide information on food banks in your community.

Education

The Need

The Department of Veterans Affairs notes that 31.9 percent of military personnel have attended some college. However, only 16.3 percent have completed a degree and only 9.5 percent have completed an advanced degree.¹² According to the American Council on Education many military undergraduates can find it difficult to finance their education, manage time constraints, transition from military life to student life, and overcome bureaucratic obstacles to completing their education.

For many military spouses, barriers to employment are not due to a lack of education. In fact, according to the Department of Defense, 84 percent of military spouses have at least some college education, with 25 percent holding a bachelor's degree and 10 percent holding an advanced degree.¹³ For those military spouses either not completing a degree or wanting to continue their education, the principle barrier to accomplishing these goals is relocation.

Military children typically attend between seven to nine schools before they graduate, moving approximately every two years.¹⁴ This creates challenges for children, families

¹² Military.com. Female Vets Earning More in Civilian Work. <http://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/career-advice/military-transition/female-vets-earning-more.html>

¹³ National Military Family Association. (<http://www.militaryfamily.org/get-info/support-family/spouse-employment/>).

¹⁴ Military Teen. (2011) Military Children Face Greater Academic Challenges Due To Relocation and Emotional Stress. <http://www.militaryteenonline.com/profiles/blogs/military-children-face-greater>.

and schools including education requirements, curricula, and systems that may not “translate” from one school or district to another. For example, one school may utilize a quarter system, while another school is on a semester system, or one school system may adhere to a more traditional year while a new school may operate as a year-round school. These issues can add to the emotional distress children face when a parent is absent for long periods of time, sometimes deployed to a dangerous destination.

The Opportunity

Several existing resources aim to support the academic achievement of military children by helping schools become more responsive to their unique needs and those of their families. Additional initiatives promote and support higher education institutions and programs that expand education opportunities, ease transferability for military-connected students, and expand job training opportunities for military spouses and veterans. Learn more about these through the websites below.

The GI Bill (<http://www.gibill.va.gov/>) – Provides financial support for education and housing to eligible individuals. Recipients of this benefit must have received an honorable discharge to be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Approved training under the Post-9/11 GI Bill includes graduate and undergraduate degrees, vocational/technical training, on-the-job training, flight training, correspondence training, licensing and national testing programs, entrepreneurship training, and tutorial assistance. All training programs must be approved for GI Bill benefits. The Post-9/11 GI Bill also offers some service members the opportunity to transfer their GI Bill to dependents.

Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) (<http://benefits.va.gov/vow/education.htm>) – Offers up to 12 months of training assistance to unemployed veterans. Part of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, VRAP provides resources for education to qualifying veterans. Participants must be enrolled in a VA approved program of education offered by a community college or technical school. The program must lead to an Associate Degree, Non-College Degree, or a Certificate, and train the veteran for a high demand occupation.

Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts

(http://www.military.com/spouse/cf/0,,cf_CAA_111407,00.html) – Assists military spouses seeking to gain the skills and credentials necessary to begin or advance their careers. Career Advancement Accounts (CAA) cover the costs of training and education, enabling participants to earn a degree or credential in in-demand, portable fields in almost any community across the country. CAA can be used to pay up to \$3,000 in fees for one year, and may be renewed for one additional year, for a total two-year account amount of up to \$6,000 per spouse.

National Military Family Association (<http://www.militaryfamily.org/our-programs/military-spouse-scholarships/>) – Offers a scholarship program to help prepare military spouses for meaningful employment. Scholarships are awarded to spouses of all uniformed service members that are active duty, National Guard and Reserve, retirees, and to survivors of uniformed service members. Scholarship funds can be used for tuition, fees, and school room and board for full- or part-time programs including: (1) GED or ESL; (2) vocational training; (3) professional certification; (4) post-secondary education; (5) graduate school; and/or (6) in-class or online education.

Touching Base (<http://www2.ed.gov/news/newsletters/touchingbase/index.html>) – Offers a quarterly newsletter for the military community through the U.S. Department of Education. This newsletter focuses on issues related to education for spouses, military children and veterans.

Veteran's Upward Bound (http://www.ndsu.edu/trio/veterans_upward_bound/) – Helps military veterans prepare for and successfully complete a post-secondary education and complements benefits like the GI Bill and Vocational Rehabilitation. This program provides: (1) a refresher program to prepare veterans for college, technical, or vocational school; (2) academic guidance to help select an appropriate school and study plan; and (3) referral to appropriate community service agencies.

Let's Read Let's Move (<http://www.serve.gov/lrlm.asp>) – Addresses summer reading loss and childhood obesity. This initiative of the Corporation for National and Community Service supports volunteers and AmeriCorps members in engaging youth in summer reading and physical activity, as well as providing information about healthy, affordable food.

Tutor.Com for the Military (<http://www.tutor.com/military>) – Offers homework and studying help to K-12 students. Through a special initiative of the Department of Defense MWR Library Program, Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program and Navy General Library Program, this service is provided free or charge to military families.

Community Connectedness

The Need

Volunteerism is an important way for veterans and military families to connect with their communities. In fact, 70 percent of active duty military volunteer in their

communities and 50 percent volunteer after returning from a deployment.¹⁵ Even those veterans not currently volunteering say they are willing to, with 62 percent willing to contribute at least 6 hours per month to serve their communities.¹⁶

When it comes to transitioning from military to civilian life, 55 percent of veterans who volunteer while transitioning from the military to civilian life reported their transitions were going well, compared to 47 percent of non-volunteers.¹⁷ The difference held for their families' transition, with 48 percent of veterans who volunteer saying their families' needs were being met, while only 38 percent of non-volunteers said the same. The youngest veterans are having the hardest time with their transitions and finding meaningful service opportunities. Only 47 percent of veterans 29 years old or younger report their transitions are going well compared with 57 percent of veterans 30 years or older.

The Opportunity

Veterans not only have the capacity and skills to help address problems in their communities, but there is also good evidence to show that such service will help veterans themselves. As a faith leader you are likely already connected to and conversant with opportunities to serve in your community, but the resources below can help you seek additional opportunities, as well.

Joining Forces (<http://joiningforces.allforgood.org>) — Provides a searchable database with volunteer opportunities by interest area and location.

Corporation for National and Community Service (<http://www.nationalservice.gov>) - Engages more than five million Americans in service through various programs (see below). The Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency, is committed to engaging all Americans, including veterans and military families, in positively impacting the lives of the military community through volunteering and national service. For more information, visit: <http://www.serve.gov/vets.asp>

Senior Corps (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/programs/seniorcorps.asp>)
— Leverages the energy and efforts of citizens aged 55 and over to help meet the

¹⁵ Yonkman, M.M. & Bridgeland, J.M. (2009). All Volunteer Force: From Military Service to Civilian Service. Civic Enterprises: Washington, D.C. (p. 9).

¹⁶ Yonkman, M.M. & Bridgeland, J.M. (2009). All Volunteer Force: From Military Service to Civilian Service. Civic Enterprises: Washington, D.C. (p. 10).

¹⁷ Yonkman, M.M. & Bridgeland, J.M. (2009). All Volunteer Force: From Military Service to Civilian Service. Civic Enterprises: Washington, D.C. (p. 10).

needs and challenges of America's communities. Grants administered through Senior Corps provide funding for three special programs: (1) Foster Grandparents; (2) Senior Companion Program; and (3) Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

AmeriCorps (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/programs/americorps.asp>) — Engages members through more than 3,000 nonprofits, public agencies, and faith-based and other community organizations to help meet critical needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment. AmeriCorps members receive a living stipend, health insurance and child care assistance. After successful completion of their term of service, AmeriCorps members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award that can be used to pay for college or graduate school at Title IV schools, or to repay qualified student loans.

AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) (<http://www.americorps.gov/about/programs/vista.asp>) — Provides full-time members to nonprofit, faith-based and other community organizations, and public agencies to create and expand programs that bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty. AmeriCorps VISTA members leverage human, financial, and material resources to increase the capacity of thousands of low-income areas across the country to address challenges and improve their lives and communities.

AmeriCorps NCCC (http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/programs/americorps_nccc.asp) — Engages young people aged 18-24 in a full-time, team-based, residential program. Members live on one of five campuses around the nation. The mission of AmeriCorps NCCC is to strengthen communities and develop leaders through direct team-based national and community service. In partnership with nonprofit organizations, state and local agencies, and faith-based and other community groups, members complete service projects in all 50 states and some U.S. territories.

HandsOn Network (<http://www.handsonnetwork.org/>) — Helps people find and engage in volunteer opportunities in their local communities. Opportunities focus on innovative approaches to leveraging individual and corporate time and talent to solve community challenges. HandsOn also partners with more than 70,000 corporate, faith and nonprofit organizations to manage volunteer resources, and develop the leadership capacity of volunteers. The website includes a searchable database of volunteer

opportunities by interest area and location as well as information to connect to local HandsOn Networks and activities.

United We Serve (<http://www.serve.org>) — Connects individuals volunteer opportunities in local community, while also creating new ones through a searchable database.

VetCorps (<http://www.cadca.org/vetcorps>) — Addresses substance abuse in veterans and military families. CADCA will recruit AmeriCorps and VISTA members, particularly veterans, including inactive National Guard and Reserve members to be placed in one of CADCA's community coalitions located throughout the country to provide support to Veterans and Military Families (VMF) with a special emphasis on serving the needs of National Guard and Reserve VMF.

Contact Information for Offices of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships
Joshua DuBois, Executive Director and Special Assistant to the President
Email: whpartnerships@who.eop.gov
Phone: (202) 456-3394

Center at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Phone: (202) 358-3595
Email: partnerships@hhs.gov
Website: <http://www.hhs.gov/partnerships>

Center at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Phone: (202)-646-3487
Email: infofbc@dhs.gov
Website: <http://www.dhs.gov/fbc>

Center at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Phone: (202) 708-2404
Email: partnerships@hud.gov
Website: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/fbc>

Center at the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Phone: (202) 720-2032
Email: collaborate@usda.gov
Website: <http://www.usda.gov/partnerships>

Center at the U.S. Department of Commerce

Phone: (202) 482-0699
Email: FBNP@doc.gov
Website: <http://www.commerce.gov/office-secretary/center-faith-based-and-neighborhood-partnerships>

Center at the U.S. Department of Education

Phone: (202) 401-1876
Email: edpartners@ed.gov
Website: <http://www.ed.gov/edpartners>

Center at the Small Business Administration

Phone: (202) 205-6452
Email: partnerships@sba.gov
Website: <http://www.sba.gov/fbci>

**Center at the U.S. Agency for
International Development (USAID)**

Phone: (202) 712-4080
Email: fbci@usaid.gov
Website: http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_partnerships/fbci

Center at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Phone: (202) 461-7689
Email: VApartnerships@va.gov
Website: <http://www1.va.gov/cfbnpartnerships>

Center at the U.S. Department of Labor

Phone: (202) 693-6017
Email: CFBNP@dol.gov
Website: <http://www.dol.gov/cfbnp>

Center at the U.S. Department of Justice

Phone: (202) 305-7462

Email: partnerships@ojp.usdoj.gov
Website: <http://www.ojp.gov/fbnp/>

Center at the Environmental Protection Agency

Phone: 202-564-4308
Email: partnerships@epa.gov
Website: <http://www.epa.gov/fbnpartnerships/>

Point of Contact at the Corporation for National and Community Service

Phone: (202) 606-7554
Email: fbnp@cns.gov
Website: http://www.nationalservice.gov/for_organizations/faith

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The White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (2011). Partnership for the Common Good: A Partnership Guide for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Organizations. Office of the President: Washington, D.C.

The White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (2011). Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting Our Commitment. Office of the President: Washington, D.C.

U.S. Department of Labor (2012). DOL News Brief. U.S. Department of Labor: Washington, D.C.

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General Website Resources

The following websites were used to identify resources as well as provide information about needs.

Affordable Care Act (www.HealthCare.gov)

American Veterans with Brain Injuries (<http://www.avbi.org/>)

AmeriCorps (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/programs/americorps.asp>)

AmeriCorps NCCC

(http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/programs/americorps_nccc.asp)

AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)

(<http://www.americorps.gov/about/programs/vista.asp>)

Coaching Into Care (<http://www.mirecc.va.gov/coaching/>)

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (<http://www.cadca.org/>)

Corporation for National and Community Service (<http://www.nationalservice.gov>)

Corporation for National and Community Service <http://www.serve.gov/vets.asp>

Defence Centers of Excellence (DCoE) Outreach Center

(<http://www.dcoe.health.mil/24-7help.aspx>)

Department of Treasury Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP)

(www.makingyourhomeaffordable.gov)

Disabled American Veterans <http://www.dav.org/>

DoD/VA Suicide Outreach: Resources for Suicide Prevention

(<http://www.suicideoutreach.org/>)

Employer Support of National Guard and Reserve Ombudsman Services (ESGR)

(<http://www.military.com/benefits/military-legal-matters/userra/employer-support-of-the-guard-and-reserve.html>)

Hire A Vet (<http://www.hireveterans.com/>)

Hiring Our Heroes: Chamber of Commerce Veteran and Military Spouse Hiring

Events (<http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/events>)

HUD Supportive Housing

(http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/vash)

HUD VET (<http://www.hudhre.info/VeteransAssistance/>)

Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA)

(<https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/fssa/>)

Fatherhood (www.fatherhood.gov/initiative)

Feeding America (<http://feedingamerica.org/need-help.aspx>)

Let's Read Let's Move (<http://www.serve.gov/lrlm.asp>)

Let's Move Faith and Communities Toolkit

(http://www.hhs.gov/partnerships/resources/Pubs/lets_move_toolkit.pdf) –Provides

Medicine Abuse Awareness

(http://www.cadca.org/about/programs_campaigns/medicine-abuse-awareness)

Military OneSource

(<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/MOS/f?p=MOS:CONTENT:0::::SV,UT,LG,CID,TID,COHE:Army%2520Active,Member,EN,,,261882>)

Military Spouse.Com (<http://www.military.com/spouse>)

Military Spouse Business Alliance

(<http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/military-spouse-business-alliance-msba>)

Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts

(http://www.military.com/spouse/cf/0,,cf_CAA_111407,00.html)

Military Spouse Job Search (<http://www.military.com/spouse/job-search>)

Military Spouse Employment Partnership (<https://msejobs.militaryonesource.mil/>)

Military Youth on the Move

(<http://apps.mhf.dod.mil/pls/psgprod/f?p=MYOM:HOME2:0>)

My Next Move for Veterans (<http://www.mynextmove.org/vets/>)

National Military Family Association <http://www.militaryfamily.org/>

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (<http://www1.va.gov/homeless/>)

National Resource Directory (NRD) (<https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>): —

Operation Homefront (<http://www.operationhomefront.net/servicedetail.aspx?id=1026>)

Operation Purple (<http://www.militaryfamily.org/our-programs/operation-purple/>)

Safe Routes to Schools (<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resourcecenter/quick-facts>)

Senior Corps (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/programs/seniorcorps.asp>)

SNAP (http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant_recipients/apply.htm)

Stand-Down Against Homelessness (www.va.gov/Homeless)

Teaming Up To Serve Veterans and Military Families

<http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/service-activities/veterans-services>

The GI Bill (<http://www.gibill.va.gov/>)

Tobacco Initiatives (<http://www.cadca.org/tobacco>)

Touching Base (<http://www2.ed.gov/news/newsletters/touchingbase/index.html>)

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (<http://www.va.gov/>)

United States Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Services (DOLVETS) <http://www.dol.gov/vets/>)

U.S. Department of Education, Together for Tomorrow <http://www.TFT.challenge.gov>

U.S. Small Business Administration www.sba.gov/training, www.score.org,
www.sba.gov/women, www.sba.gov/sba-direct, <http://www.sba.gov/bootstobusiness>

United We Serve <http://www.serve.gov/vets.asp>

Veterans Corps <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/serveamerica/veterans.asp>

Veterans Fast Launch (http://www.score.org/Veterans_Fast_Launch

Veterans and Military Family Health

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/veteransandmilitaryfamilyhealth.html>

Veterans Job Bank

(https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/home/veterans_job_bank)

Veterans Services http://www.va.gov/landing2_vetsrv.htm

Volunteer Transportation Network: The Facts

<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/civic-resources/vet-transport>

Veteran's Upward Bound http://www.ndsu.edu/trio/veterans_upward_bound/)